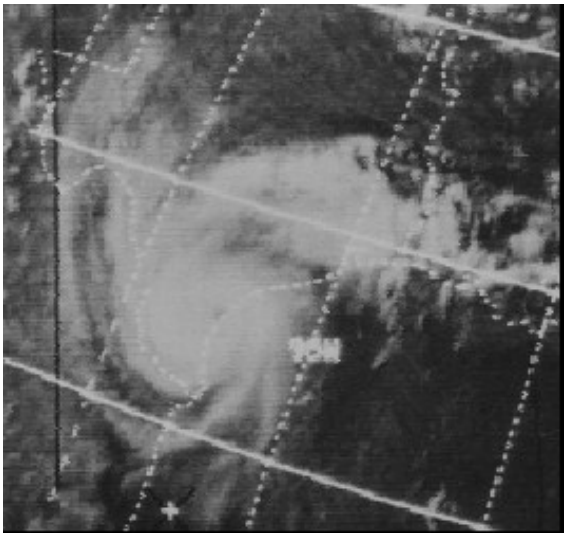
South Texas Weather Journal

NWS Corpus Christi, TX Spring 2012 Edition

Hurricane Season is Coming Soon!

John Metz — Warning Coordination Meteorologist

I know it seems like we just wrapped up the 2011 season. But the start of the 2012 Hurricane Season is only 2 months away! There are many preparedness activities to consider, such as building your hurricane supply kit, making sure your insurance is up to date, ensuring your storm shutters are ready to go, and planning your evacuation.



Hurricane Celia – Aug 3, 1970

It's been over 40 years since a major hurricane impacted the mid Texas coast directly. Considering this lack of activity, it's easy to get complacent. That's why you need to schedule a hurricane preparedness class in your community for your business, or civic group. The National Weather Service in Corpus Christi provides free training for those interested. A meteorologist will walk you through Texas Hurricane History, hazards associated with these terrible storms, and how to prepare. To schedule a class in your area, please contact John Metz at 361-299-1353 x 223, or e-mail john.metz@noaa.gov

Inside this issue:

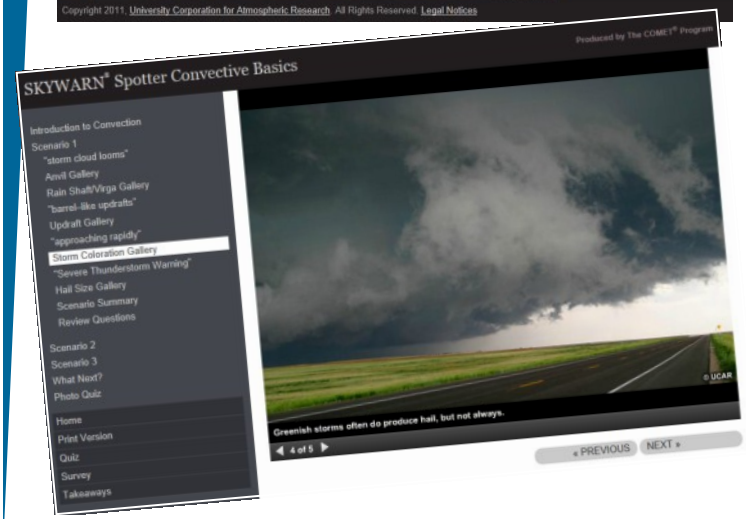
LOOKING AHEAD

SKYWARN

Jason Runyen — Lead Forecaster

Across South Texas, dedicated volunteers risk their personal safety to provide first-hand severe weather reports to their local officials, and the National Weather Service (NWS) in Corpus Christi. Their reason: to help protect the lives and property of the citizens in South Texas.

Being a storm spotter not only means dedication, but also training. Each year the NWS in Corpus Christi trains members of police, fire department, emergency management, amateur radio, and other civic groups in the latest storm spotting techniques. The goal of the training is to prepare the spotter to identify hazardous weather conditions, how to report that information to the local NWS, and personal safety.



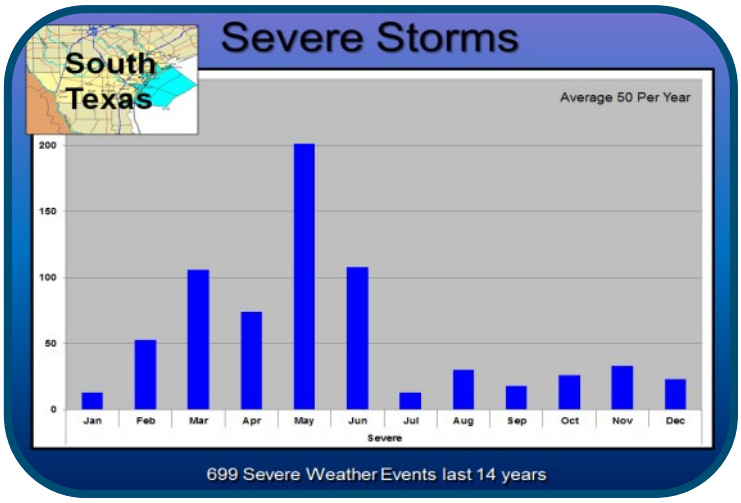
Most classes are taught during February and March. However, if your group is interested in hosting a Skywarn class we can try and accommodate you during April and May. Please contact Jason Runyen at Jason.Runyen@noaa.gov to coordinate setting up a class.

If you could not attend a class locally, becoming a Skywarn Spotter has also become easier this year with the development of the online Skywarn Spotter Training Course. There are two new online courses, including: "Role of the Skywarn Spotter" and "Skywarn Spotter Convective Basics". These courses cover the basics of being a Skywarn Spotter. They are free and accessible from the METED website **www.meted.ucar.edu**.

Severe Weather Season has Arrived! Are you Prepared?

Jason Runyen — Lead Forecaster

Severe weather can occur in every month of the year. However, in a typical year South Texas experiences most of its weather from March through the first half of June. In an average year South Texas will see around 50 storms that produce large hail, damaging straight-line winds, or tornadoes.



Above: Severe Weather events by month over the last 14 years in South Texas

This severe weather season is already off to a fast pace across Texas, including a devastating tornado event across the Dallas-Fort Worth area and large hail event in McAllen.

Left: Hail damage in McAllen, TX on March 29th, Right: Homes destroyed by tornado in Lancaster, TX on April 3rd

Closer to home, we have recently been reminded the power of straight-line winds, as 60-80 mph winds produced considerable damage in George West on March 20th and in Port Lavaca on April 2nd. As drought conditions slowly improve in 2012 this year's severe weather season looks to be near or above average.

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Above: Roof peeled off a George West, TX hotel on March 20th from straight-line winds

If a storm approaches your location will you be ready? Having a severe weather readiness plan in place and that is well-practiced is a must for your family. Here are simple steps to take to ensure you are prepared for this season:

- **Have a safety plan:** Identify safe areas where you can shelter at home and work in the event of severe weather. Abandon mobile homes in the event of a tornado or severe straight-line winds. Sheds, picnic shelters, tents or covered porches do NOT protect you from lightning.
- **Monitor the weather:** Check the forecast before you start your day at weather.gov, listening to NOAA Weather Radio, or tuning into local media outlets.
- **Postpone activities:** If thunderstorms are forecast consider postponing outdoor activities to avoid being caught in a dangerous situation.
- **Get to a safe place:** If a severe thunderstorm warning has been issued for your area go to your safe location designated in your safety plan. Remember: When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors! Stay inside until 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder.
- **Turn Around, Don't Drown!:** Six inches of fast moving water can knock you off your feet. Two feet of moving water can float and carry most vehicles away.

Following through with these simple steps could be the difference between life or death! For additional safety information visit: http://www.nws.noaa.gov/safety.php

Stay safe this severe weather season!

SAFETY

Beat the Heat...Check the Back Seat!
Scott Cordero — Meteorologist in Charge

Stifling heat and humidity are a hallmark of the summer in South Texas. Summer in South Texas runs hotter, and more humid, than most of the country. One of the biggest weather related risks during the summer months is the possibility of a child dying in a vehicle from heat stroke. The temperature inside a vehicle can rise 20 degrees in as little as 10 minutes, and 50 degrees in an hour. In the South Texas, actual temperatures are well into 90s, and heat index ("feels–like" temperature) routinely between 100°F and 105°F (38°C and 41°C) on most days from June to September. When this heat enters a closed vehicle, actual temperatures inside the vehicle can reach 130°F (54°C) in minutes, and approach 150°F (66°C) in less than an hour! This can cause hyperthermia (heat stroke) in only minutes, particularly in children, whose body temperatures warm at a rate three to five times faster than an adult.

In the last 12 years, 482 children have died nationwide from heat stroke suffered while in a vehicle. Half of these were children that were forgotten by a parent or other caregiver, and nearly 20 percent died when parents knowingly left their child in a vehicle. The other died playing in an unattended vehicle. Of these 482 fatalities, 66 occurred in Texas.

All of these tragic deaths are preventable. To help bring awareness to this issue, the NWS is using the slogan "Beat the Heat, Check the Backseat" to remind people to remember to check for small children in a car seat, and to never leave children unattended in a vehicle, even for a few moments.

Basic safety recommendations

- Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle. Not even for a minute!
- If you see a child unattended in a hot vehicle, call 9-1-1 immediately!
- Be sure that all occupants leave the vehicle when unloading. Don't overlook sleeping babies.
- Always lock your car and ensure children do not have access to keys or remote entry devices.
- If a child is missing, check the car first, including the trunk.
- Teach your children that vehicles are never to be used as a play area.
- If a child is missing, ALWAYS CHECK THE CAR FIRST!
- Keep a stuffed animal in the car seat. When the child is put in the seat, place the animal in the front with the driver.
- Or, place your purse or briefcase in the back seat as a reminder that you have your child in the car.
- Make "look before you leave" a routine whenever you get out of the car.
- Ensure your child care provider will call you if your child does not show up for school.
- Pets are family, too! Never leave them in a vehicle during the summer.

NOAA Weather Radio

Lara Keys — Intern Meteorologist

NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) is the voice of the National Weather Service. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, NWR broadcasts a continuous cycle of current weather conditions, weekly forecasts, coastal marine forecasts, climate data, and more. In addition to this regular programming, NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts alerts immediately any time a warning has been issued for local hazardous weather. What does this mean for you? You can receive up-to-date warnings on severe, hazardous weather while you are at home, work, outdoors, or traveling. NOAA Weather Radio receivers come in a variety of shapes and sizes. They are relatively inexpensive (between $20-40), and can be easily set to tone alarm for warnings in the local county or counties you desire. These radios are equipped with a Specific Area Message Encoder (S.A.M.E.). They will even turn themselves on and alarm for warnings if the radio is off! Be sure to get a receiver equipped with battery backup so that you can receive warnings whether the power goes out or you are outdoors. Purchase your NOAA Weather Radio receiver from most major department stores, electronics stores, or even on the internet.

County	S.A.M.E. Code	Frequency
Aransas	048007	162.550 162.475
Bee	048025	162.550 162.450
Calhoun	048057	162.400 162.475
Duval	048249	162.525
Goliad	048175	162.400
Jim Wells	048249	162.550 162.525
Kleberg	048273	162.550 162.525
La Salle	048283	162.500
Live Oak	048297	162.550 162.450
McMullen	048311	162.450
Nueces	048355	162.550
Refugio	048391	162.550
San Patricio	048409	162.550
Victoria	048469	162.400
Webb	048479	162.550

Setup your radio with the frequencies and S.A.M.E. codes listed above for the counties you would like to receive warnings.

LOOKING AHEAD

La Nina Ending In The Equatorial Pacific: Drought Conditions Improving Over Much Of Texas

Greg Wilk - Lead Forecaster

The historic and devastating Texas drought of 2011, which accounted for 7.62 billion dollars in agricultural losses, appears to be slowly coming to an end over much of the state. This drought, which began in the fall of 2010, not only caused devastation to the agricultural community, but also destroyed millions of trees and resulted in water shortages in many Texas communities. In South Texas, marine life was even impacted, as red tide killed countless numbers of fish and incapacitated the mollusk industry. Migratory birds (like the whooping crane) even changed their habits during the winter, many choosing not to spend time in Texas (due to lack of food) but habitat farther north.

This devastating drought resulted from a persistent La Nina over the Equatorial Pacific Ocean. Climatologically, when water temperatures over the Eastern Pacific are cooler than normal, Texas weather is warmer and drier than normal (especially during the fall and winter). This certainly held true during this La Nina, which began in the Fall of 2010 and, except for a brief lull during the summer of 2011, has continued through the first quarter of 2012. The impacts from this long-term La Nina peaked over Texas during the fall of 2011. As the figure below shows, in early October 2011, nearly 90 percent of the state was in exceptional drought status. That percentage has fallen dramatically to less than 15 percent. Unfortunately, as of April 3, Corpus Christi remains in exceptional drought status (see Figure below).

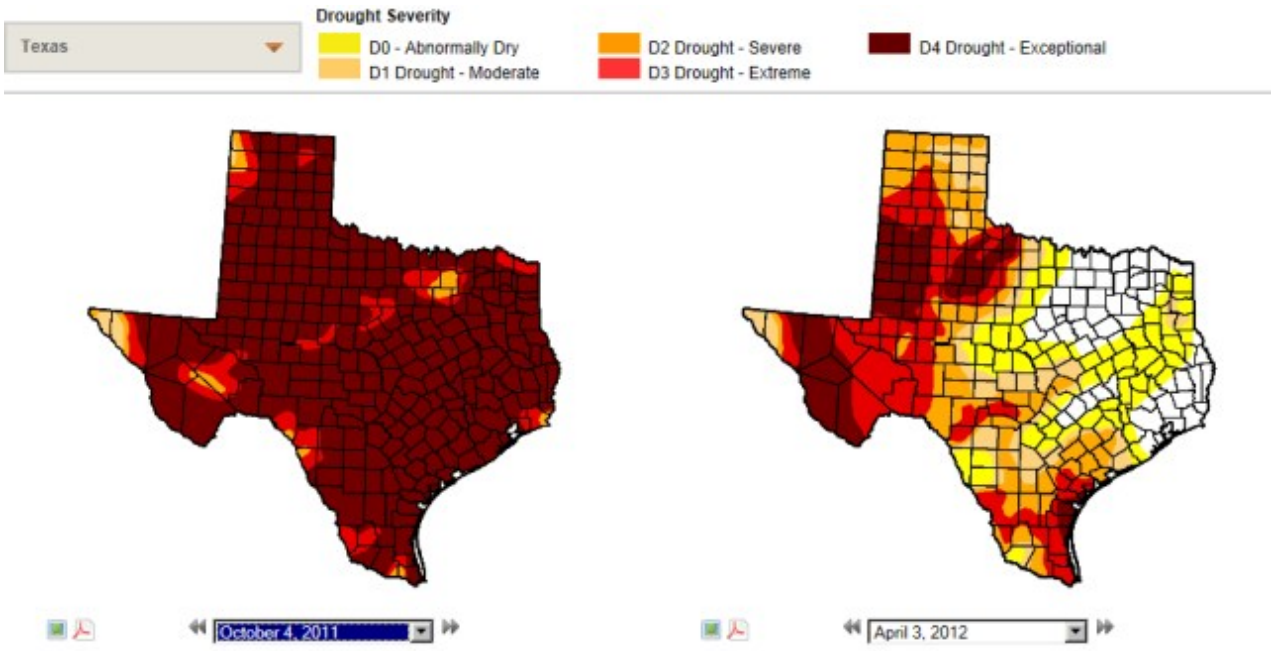

Figure 1: A comparison of drought conditions over Texas during the peak of La Nina in the Fall of 2011, and more recent drought conditions.

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La Nina conditions have been weakening slowly over the past few months. The weaker La Nina has resulted in more widespread precipitation over Texas since the start of 2012. In fact, eastern portions of North Texas and South Central Texas have experienced locally heavy rainfall and flooding. This excessive rainfall brought minor and moderate flooding on the Guadalupe River during the last few months. According to the Climate Prediction Center (http://www.cpc.noaa.gov), neutral El-Nino/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) conditions are expected by the end of April 2012. These neutral conditions will likely last through at least part of the upcoming 2012 Atlantic hurricane season. It is also possible that a weak El Nino may develop by early fall 2012. If that is the case, then South Texas could experience a wetter than normal fall and winter.

So, what does this all mean for Texas in general and South Texas in particular? Neutral conditions in the equatorial Eastern Pacific generally mean a more normal rainfall pattern for Texas. While La Nina conditions tend to slightly increase the amount of organized tropical systems during hurricane season, it can also suppress summertime convection along the sea-breeze. As a result, a more normal rainfall pattern will likely emerge in the upcoming months. However, due to large rainfall deficits remaining, the latest Drought Outlook Product, valid through the end of June, calls for drought conditions to persist over much of Texas, with only minor improvements expected. However, future seasonal outlooks are more optimistic on rainfall forecasts over South Texas.

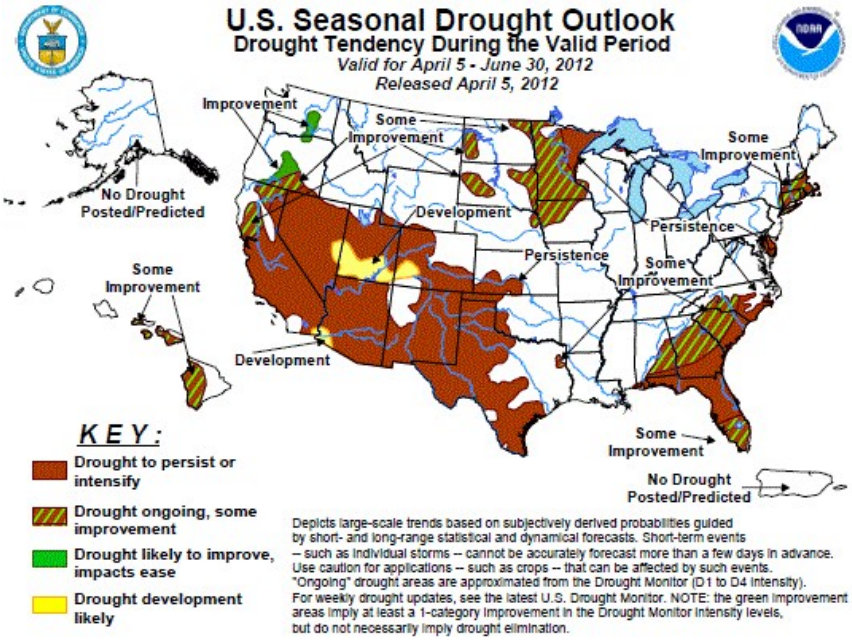


Figure 2: Seasonal Drought Outlook product, valid through the end of June. Unfortunately, persistence is forecast for South Texas.

To keep track of the current drought, visit our Drought Page by either clicking on the thumbnail/icon "Drought Info" located near the bottom right of our homepage, or type: http://www.srh.noaa.gov/crp/?n=drought. Drought information specific to South Texas can be found in our Drought Information Statements, along with the latest Drought Monitor graphic for Texas. The latest Drought Outlook graphic along with several links related to drought are also available there. Hopefully, with the end of La Nina, more normal rainfall will return to South Texas and alleviate (if not eliminate) these long-term drought conditions in the very near future.

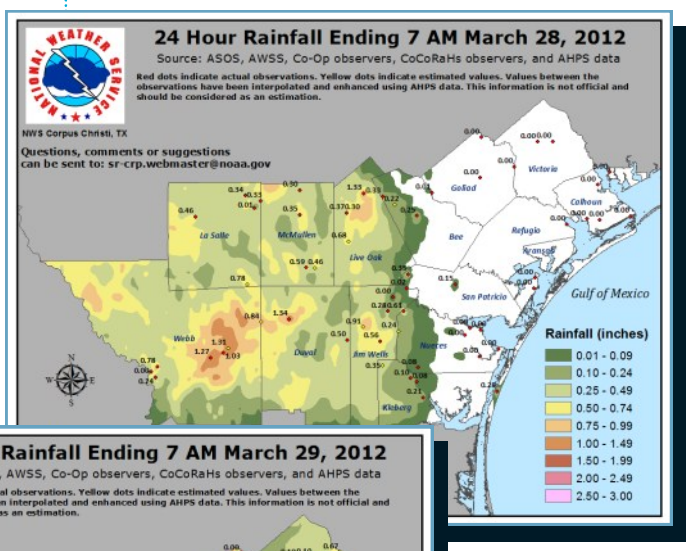
ON THE WEB

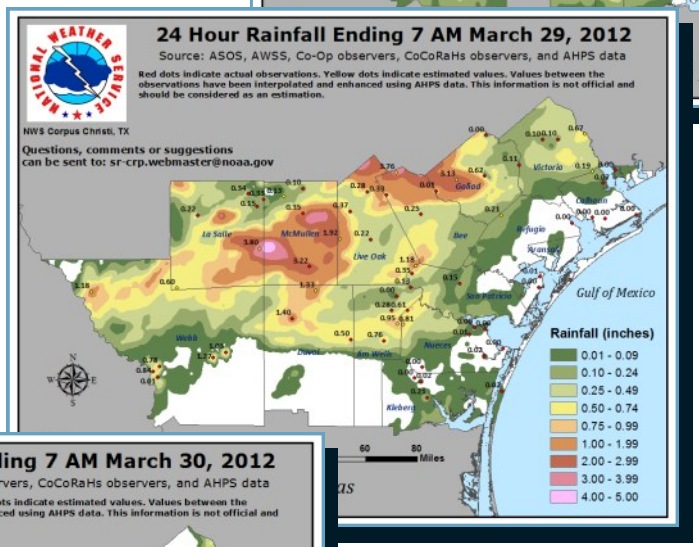
GIS Rainfall Map Archive Online

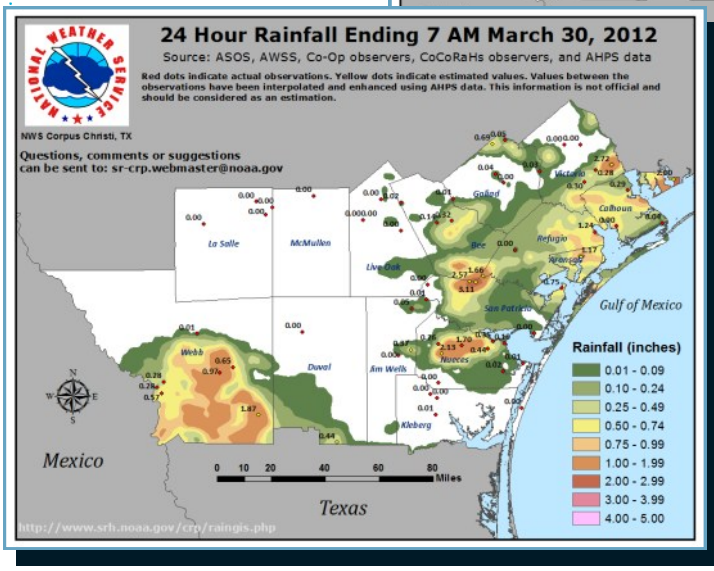
Lara Keys — Intern Meteorologist

The GIS rainfall maps which were unveiled in the Fall 2011 edition of the South Texas Weather Journal have finally found a permanent location on the web. These maps, which graphically display rainfall totals gathered through METAR sites, Co-Op observers, CoCoRaHS observers, and the Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service (AHPS), across south Texas, can now be found at http://www.srh.noaa.gov/crp/raingis.php

The current map is automatically displayed on the website. To view the archived maps, click Select Date above the map and select a date from the drop-down calendar. The archive begins in early November 2011.



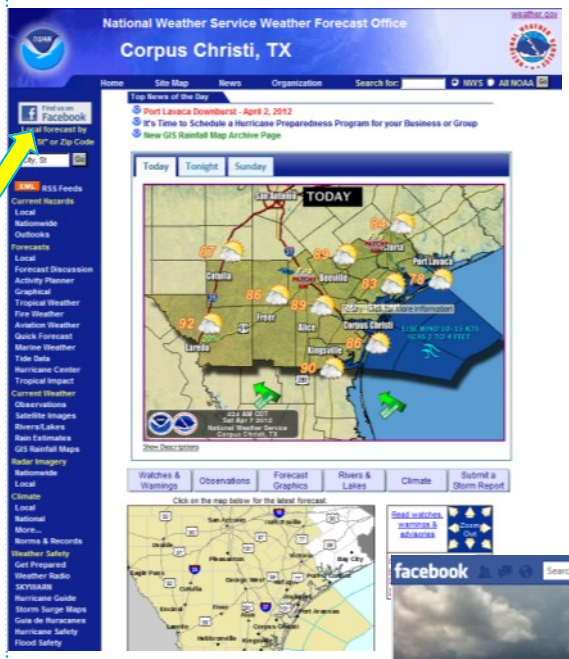




If you are interested in contributing to the South Texas rainfall database, we are always looking for CoCoRaHS observers! Being a rainfall observer greatly helps the National Weather Service. It is free to sign up, and you will receive an official rain gauge to use to report daily rainfall totals. If you want to find more information about the CoCoRaHS program or to sign up, go to http://www.cocorahs.org/Application.aspx.

Find us on Facebook!

Rob Hart — Journeyman Forecaster



Did you know that the Corpus Christi National Weather Service office is on **Facebook**? You can now follow us on Facebook to obtain weather information for all of South Texas such as daily graphical forecasts, storm reports, tropical information, and radar updates! In addition, anyone can also submit photographs and local weather reports to us via our Facebook page. To follow us on Facebook, simply go to the following link and click "**like**":

http://www.facebook.com/US.NationalWeatherServiceCorpusChristi.gov

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Lead Forecaster Mike Gittinger and Intern Meteorologists Matt Grantham and Zach Finch Depart from NWS WFO Corpus Christi

WFO Corpus Christi has had three members of the staff move on over the winter. Lead Forecaster Mike Gittinger and Intern Meteorologists Matt Grantham and Zach Finch have all moved from WFO Corpus Christi to other forecast offices across the country. In early December Mike Gittinger made the move with his family to WFO Tampa Bay, Florida. Mike is now serving as the Emergency Response Meteorologist Team Leader where he provides Impact-based Decision Support Services (DSS) to core partners in the area. At the same time we were saying goodbye to Mike, we also said goodbye to Zach Finch. Zach went to snowy Cheyenne, Wyoming just in time for the start of winter where he began working as a journeyman forecaster. Zach also serves as part of the Fire Weather and the Social Media teams at WFO CYS. Close to a month later, Matt Grantham headed back to his previous office, Birmingham, Alabama, as a journeyman forecaster, where he serves as the Dual Pol Radar focalpoint. We will miss all three of these members of our staff, but we congratulate them on their promotions and know they will make great contributions in there new positions.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

New Lead Forecaster — Todd Beal

Todd Beal is the new senior forecaster at the National Weather Service (NWS) Weather Forecast Office (WFO) of Corpus Christi, Texas. Todd was born and raised in Memphis, TN. The active weather common to the Mid-South led him to pursue a career in meteorology. Todd received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Mississippi State University. Prior to arriving in Corpus Christi, he was a SCEP student and intern at the NWS office in Memphis, TN and a journeyman forecaster at the NWS office in Amarillo, TX. Todd is excited about the move to South Texas and the challenges that marine and tropical weather forecasting bring.

As an avid sports fan, Todd enjoys watching English Premiere League soccer, St. Louis Cardinals baseball, and Mississippi State football. He also enjoys playing golf, crappie and bass fishing, and spending time with his dogs.

New Meteorologist Intern — Alina Nieves

Alina del Mar Nieves is the new meteorologist intern at the National Weather Service (NWS) Weather Forecast Office (WFO) of Corpus Christi, Texas. She came all the way from Puerto Rico. It was the constant exposure to hurricanes that drove Alina's interest into weather. She graduated from the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez (UPRM) Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in Theoretical Physics; she also completed a Curricular Sequence in Atmospheric Science and Meteorology which allowed her to comply with the federal requirements to become a meteorologist for the NWS. As a student she participated in a series of internships sponsored by the Department of Physics at UPRM and the NWS. These opportunities brought her to WFO Memphis, Tennessee and NOAA NWS Caribbean Tsunami Warning Program (CTWP). As a senior student Alina worked as a SCEP at the CTWP and was actively involved in community outreach activities and research projects related to geophysics. She was an active member of her UPRM Student Chapter of the AMS and the founder and editor of the chapter magazine Juracán. On her spare time Alina enjoys reading, handcrafting, and taking in the sun by the beach.

www.weather.gov/corpuschristi

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